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## Sources of Balkan Insecurity:

### *The Need for a Comprehensive Strategy*

by Jeffrey Simon

#### Conclusions

- Many of the recent Balkan conflicts have been temporarily halted through emergency crisis-resolution actions. These emergency actions, though, have not focused on the interrelated sources of these conflicts, and have not thus far led to a real, lasting regional solution.
- Although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has proven to be necessary in monitoring minority activities and elections in the region, it has been insufficient to resolve the region's ills.
- The European Union (EU) and West European Union (WEU) remain "blind" to many of the region's countries and their problems. Unfortunately, some of the actions these organizations have taken may have had a negative effect on the region's stability.
- Regional expectations about what NATO (and the United States) can actually achieve far exceed NATO's collective will, political-military capacities and the realities of the United States' limits. Yet, almost all attention has been focused upon NATO intervention. Hence, regional expectations are likely to remain unfulfilled with adverse implications for NATO's prestige and U.S. influence.

#### The Roots of Balkan Insecurity

The roots of Balkan insecurity and instability can be attributed to at least the following four interrelated problems: (1) psychological factors; (2) state-building challenges; (3) economic development; and (4) security/defense issues. Efforts to eradicate the sources of Balkan insecurity and conflict must attack *all* these problems simultaneously. Because NATO is only effective in ameliorating two of the four problems—psychological and security/defense—a more comprehensive and coordinated strategy is necessary.

#### Psychological Factors: Balkan versus Southeast European

Two fundamentally different and contradictory modes of thinking remain evident in the region. The predominant emphasizes the pursuit of narrow nationalistic interests even at the expense of one's

neighbors. This mode could be labeled "Balkan" (with its images of Balkan powder kegs and ghosts); it employs history to justify the need to rectify past political or social injustice.

A very different mode of thinking, which remains latent in the region, stresses cooperation. This mode could be labeled as "Southeast European." It requires shedding historical blinders and transcending legacies by stressing the need for cooperative activities and institutions, such as the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (SEECI), the Southeast European Defense ministerial, or the Multinational Peace Force South-Eastern Europe (MPFSEE).

The historical model for such cooperation is the successful reconciliation of former adversaries—Germany and France—in Western Europe. We now need to implement this model in the southeast corner of Europe. It needs to be recalled, though, that the German-French project required attention to cooperative institution-building as well as substantial resources over a 50-year period.

In sum, enormous time and effort will be required to erode and eradicate the predominant psychological Balkan attitude. Compared to Western Europe, which has had a 50-year head-start, the Southeast European region is only beginning.

### **State-building Challenges**

The post-Communist legacy presents a region-wide need to develop political and social institutions to meet the needs of each state's citizens—the challenge of state-building at the most basic level.

While Germany and France were being slowly embedded in the institutional web of NATO and the European Community/Union, Communist regimes uniformly suppressed historic national differences and the vestiges of the Treaties of Berlin (1878) and Trianon (1920) in Europe's southeast corner.

Complicating the challenge is the fact that the post-Communist regional legacy remains diverse. Some states, such as Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria, maintained statehood throughout Communist rule. Others, including the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia must develop independent state institutions from the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), much as Moldova must from the former Soviet Union. The FRY must develop state institutions to accommodate the varying needs of its ethnically diverse citizens in Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia.

In all cases, though, the major challenge is how to develop state institutions that meet the needs of *all* citizens. State-building must accommodate ethnic minority participation and tolerate their contacts with ethnic brethren abroad. To the degree that minorities "feel" they have a place within the state, the state might be judged as being democratically healthy and viable. To the degree citizens feel excluded from state institutions, they may pose a potential threat to the viability of that state, weakening it. Among the weak states, which predominate the region, two (Albania and Bulgaria in 1996) have already failed and others (including Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina) pose the potential for "failing" in the future.

Southeast European states provide many security risks arising from the alienation of ethnic minorities from state institutions. This alienation can and has led to violence, bloodshed, and the displacement of families, communities, and minority groupings with the resulting danger of conflict spilling across state borders. For example, remaining from the legacy of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, and Communist rule in Albania and FRY, is the unresolved Albanian "problem." Aggravated by Serbian policies, Kosovo has become its flashpoint, where 90 percent of the Republic's two million people are Albanian Kosovars

who have been effectively excluded from participation in the state's institutions.

The Albanian minority in Macedonia is also connected to this crisis. In marked contrast to Kosovo, Macedonia's Albanian minority does participate in state institutions. But to the extent that differences persist over the actual size of the minority population (state statistics claim Albanians comprise 22 percent of the population; while the minority claims they comprise 35-40 percent) the potential for alienation exists. Many Slavic Macedonians perceive an annual Macedonia Albanian growth rate of 3.5 percent as a potential threat to the state's security. Such perceptions weaken the state. (Bulgarians also tend to portray their declining population—resulting from a high death rate, declining birthrate, and emigration—as a threat to security.)

The OSCE has been one of the most effective institutions in dealing with these security problems. It has evaluated the treatment of ethnic minorities and monitored elections. While this institution has been necessary and useful in preventing some conflicts, it has clearly been insufficient. Nevertheless, it remains one of the more effective tools for dealing with these aspects of the region's risks.

### **Economic Development**

General economic deprivation tends to exacerbate the region's ethnic tensions. Unfortunately, economic sanctions on FRY due to the Yugoslav crisis have contributed to further economic dislocation in the region. Many in the region still do not understand why they must bear the costs of sanctions without reimbursement, and view them not as a security cost, but as a burden imposed by foreign states.

Most citizens in the region define the risks to their security predominantly in domestic terms—from drug and people trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and state corruption. State interior ministries, which are responsible for domestic security, tend to be ineffective. Since the EU and WEU are the multinational institutions that are not only responsible for, but also the most capable of dealing with these internal security issues and concerns, they should assume a more active regional role.

The EU has had a positive role in stabilizing Slovenia by extending an opening for ultimate EU membership. To a lesser degree, the WEU's offer of associate partnership to Bulgaria and Romania has also offered hope. However, it might be argued that the EU and WEU have had an unwitting, but *negative* effect on the security of other regional countries by offering encouragement to some but not all.

- Regrettably, some states in the region have remained "invisible" to the EU and WEU, particularly Albania and Macedonia.
- The Schengen Agreement, which controls and limits the flow of people across borders, increases a sense of regional isolation from Europe.
- Despite NATO's adoption of the Combined Joint Task Force in January 1994, and the creation of a European deputy SACEUR in 1996 to become NATO's WEU military liaison, the WEU did *not* respond when the Albanian crisis erupted over the pyramid scheme and resulting economic collapse. Fortunately, Italy stitched together an international force (Operation Alba) to restore order.

Many in the region correctly see that economic stability is critical to their security. Many, though, incorrectly continue to see EU membership as a "life raft"—a tool to solve the problems that the "weak" regional states are unable to solve themselves. To the degree that this perception exists, and the EU

remains distant and disengaged, the feelings of isolation and abandonment will persist.

The EU and WEU need to focus more attention and resources on the region. Their lack of attention in Albania and Macedonia, the unwitting results of Schengen, and lack of commitment of economic resources and attention, contribute to the region's sense of increasing "isolation" from Europe. If ever there was a need for an EU-style Marshall Plan for the Balkans—a plan that would be in the European pillar's direct strategic interest—the time is now!

Other than Bosnia, the efforts undertaken to date by the UN, NATO, and EU/WEU in various Balkan states have mainly involved the use of military forces to prevent collapse or deter cross-border problems and to improve military-to-military relations. Too little effort has been directed toward building local capacity for democratic public security and law enforcement—as opposed to the traditional authoritarian ethos from the Communist era. By building upon and broadening the Partnership for Peace (PFP) approach—so that it includes rebuilding and re-educating local border guards, constabulary, and police—a combined effort could reduce internal tensions and minimize the need for continued external involvement. However, to be successful, this must include parallel attention and assistance to judicial institutions. The EU is much better suited than the United States on this issue, given the differences in European and American jurisprudence.

At a minimum, an active EU program that would support deepening cooperation among the region's internal security organs (to include judicial and legal reform, and police training and cooperation for example, with French gendarmerie and Italian carabinieri) would be appropriate. Such a response would give credibility to the EU/WEU's exhortations about a European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI).

### **Security/Defense Issues**

Regional misperceptions about NATO are prevalent and vary greatly. They range from the extreme Serbian view that NATO (and the United States) are the major source(s) of instability, to the more widespread and extreme misperception that NATO has an almost magical capacity to solve any security issue and to guarantee the security of any state lucky enough to slide under its umbrella (e.g., Moldovans argue that NATO should get the Russians to remove their 14th Army from Moldova). NATO's limitations are neither widely understood nor appreciated. Hence, whatever NATO ultimately does decide to do in the region is likely to result in disappointment and disillusionment because of unfulfilled expectations based upon misperceptions about the Alliance's capacity.

Although NATO's regional role is limited, it nonetheless *is* essential and significant. It has been a very effective tool in developing cooperative security through confidence-building programs and activities. NATO remains (aside from the OSCE) the one institution that has an extensive network in the region. Since it launched PFP in January 1994, all countries in the region (except Croatia and FRY) are participating. In addition, since 1994 the forms of PFP cooperation have also broadened. Initially, at the Partnership Coordination Center (PCC) at Mons, the PFP focused on developing partner military cooperation in peacekeeping, search and rescue, and humanitarian operations. In the Fall of 1995, in preparation for partner participation in the Implementation Force (IFOR)—and the Stabilization Force (SFOR) follow-on—in Bosnia, PFP's terms of reference were expanded to include "peace enforcement" operations. Finally, in July 1997 when the Madrid Summit announced enhanced PFP, partner cooperation expanded to include civil emergency planning. In sum, NATO's PFP programs and activities in the region have been wider and deeper than EU/WEU programs.

NATO enlargement plays a positive regional role through its efforts to *not* draw new division lines in

contrast to the EU/WEU enlargement process which specifically excludes much of the region. The NATO Madrid Summit reiterated Article 10, specifically mentioned the progress made by Romania and Slovenia, and instructed its foreign ministers to report on their progress at the Washington Summit in April 1999. Also, the Madrid Summit announced the establishment of the Permanent Joint Council (PJC) with Russia and a Joint Commission with Ukraine. Finally, as a replacement to the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) which was created in 1991, the Madrid Summit established the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). The EAPC has the potential to become the Alliance's political body for coordinating and enhancing cooperative security programs and policies in the region. To this end, the EAPC could establish a Southeast European action group to coordinate NATO cooperative security activities and programs with the OSCE and the EU/WEU.

One example in support of further deepening the region's embryonic cooperative security efforts has resulted from the misfortune in Bosnia. In addition to halting the conflict in Bosnia, the Dayton Accords provided the conditions for regional states to fulfill their responsibility in IFOR/SFOR. This has been a most significant laboratory for imparting the lessons and habits of cooperative security. (See, for example, "The IFOR/SFOR Experience: Lessons Learned by PFP Partners," *Strategic Forum*, No. 120, July 1997.)

A second example has been the attempt to establish combined military units to enhance transparency and build confidence. Some regional examples can be found in the Hungarian-Romanian combined battalion and in the Italian-Hungarian-Slovenian battalion.

Another example might be found in the results from the slowly developing cooperation among regional defense ministers. Following the first meeting of Defense Ministers in Tirana in 1996, a second meeting convened in Sofia in October 1997. From it resulted the May 22, 1998 Southeast European Deputy Defense Ministerial meeting in Tirana which signed a letter of intent to create a Multinational Peace Force South-Eastern Europe (MPFSEE). The initiative—signed by Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, Albania, Macedonia, and Italy (with the United States and Slovenia as observers)—intends to create a brigade-sized unit. The issues of the unit's relationship to NATO, its missions, and headquarters location remain to be determined.

No single security institution (OSCE, EU/WEU, NATO) or country (such as the United States) is capable of resolving *all* the sources of Balkan insecurity alone. Because psychological factors, state-building challenges, economic development problems, and security/defense issues are all interrelated aspects of Balkan insecurity, a comprehensive "action program" needs to be created and implemented; and a coordinated effort needs to be institutionalized between NATO and the EU. The EAPC seems the best equipped institution for developing a comprehensive plan for the region's security.

## **Recommendations**

The EU/WEU should be encouraged to actively promote Southeastern Europe's economic and political development, as well as to prevent its increasing sense of isolation resulting from the Schengen Agreement. They also need to more aggressively assist the countries of Southeastern Europe with their internal security risks.

NATO needs to better coordinate its external security activities with the EU/WEU, perhaps through the EAPC which could establish a Southeast European action group to coordinate the cooperative security activities and programs of the OSCE, EU/WEU, and NATO.

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